

Safety Note #149

BARBECUE COOKING SAFETY



A company barbecue can be viewed as a great way for team building and formulating working relationships in a fun environment. Your local fire department and hospital might have a different view, one of serious burns and nasty food poisoning incidents. According to the U.S. Fire Administration, each year an average of 6,500 grill fires result in \$27 million in property loss. These fires account for 150 injuries and an average of five deaths. Most barbecue accidents occur during the lighting of gas and charcoal grills. Improper maintenance of grills is another factor of barbecue accidents.

Listed below are several basic steps can help ensure safe, reliable operation of your outdoor barbecue appliance, regardless of what type you use:

- Consult the manufacturer's manual for safe use and assembling instructions of your barbecue grill. Follow all safety instructions given in the manual.
- Only use barbecue grills outdoors, in an open area away from any enclosure or overhang where carbon monoxide can accumulate and cause fatalities. Keep lit grills 10 feet or more away from structures and, away from flammable or combustible products and materials. Grills should always be placed on a hard, flat surface.
- Check liquid propane (LP) gas grills regularly for signs of wear, particularly for hose cracks and possible gas leaks. Also, keep burners clear of dirt and insects that can block gas hoses or tubes. Always start the LP gas grill with the lid up. If the spark igniter is going out, replace it at once. Gases can buildup while trying to reignite the grill, resulting in a potential explosion or fire.
- If you have an LP gas grill, always store the propane tanks outside, never in the house, and keep the tank in an upright position.
- Never use a propane tank if it shows signs of dents, gouges, bulges, corrosion, leakage or other forms of visual damage. The tank may be hazardous and should be checked by a liquid propane supplier.
- A fire extinguisher should be located at the barbecue grill for emergencies. If you don't have a fire extinguisher, keep a bucket of sand or a garden hose nearby.
- Using lighter fluid can be a dangerous method for lighting charcoal and wood grills. Never add lighter fluid to hot burning coals and store away from the charcoal grill. A safer alternative is to use a charcoal chimney starter instead of lighter fluid.
- Use long-handled utensils and flame-retardant gloves to avoid burns. Do not wear loose clothing which can hang into the grill rack. Wear closed-toe shoes when using a charcoal grill to prevent hot coals and sparks from burning the feet.
- Never leave a hot grill unattended and keep children and 4-H animals away from the grill area.
- Cook food thoroughly by using a food thermometer and grill temperature gauge to cook food safely and prevent food poisoning.
- Do not use electric grills and smokers in wet locations or in the rain. Before using, check electric cords for damage.
- Always have help nearby to assist with barbecue chores and if an accident should occur.

For further information on food safety, please visit <http://ucanr.org/foodsafety>.